Christian Missionaries and 'Heathen Natives': The Cultural Ethics of Early Pentecostal Missionaries

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'Creative Chaos'

The first two decades of the Pentecostal movement were certainly giddy ones, marked by feverish and often sacrificial mission activities. By 1910, only four years after the commencement of the Azusa Street revival, Pentecostal missionaries from Europe and North America were reported in over fifty nations of the world. From its beginning, Pentecostalism was characterized by an emphasis on evangelistic outreach, and all Pentecostal missionary strategy placed evangelism at the top of its priorities. Evangelism meant to go out and reach the 'lost' for Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal revival resulted in a category of ordinary but 'called' people called 'missionaries' fanning out to every corner of the globe within a remarkably short space of time. Harvey Cox suggests that the rapid spread of the movement was because of its heady and spontaneous spirituality, 'like the spread of a salubrious contagion'. It touched people emotionally, and its emphasis on experience was spread through testimony and personal contact. Faupel chronicles the spread of Pentecostalism to the nations of the world, where a lack of central organization resulted in 'creative chaos', and McGee describes the first twenty years of Pentecostal missions as mostly 'chaotic in operation'.

This paper will attempt to show that the chaos was certainly there, but was not always

¹ D. William Faupel, The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996, 212-6; Cecil M. Robeck, 'Pentecostal Origins in Global Perspective'. Hunter, H.D. & Hocken, P.D. (eds), All Together in One Place: Theological Papers from the Brighton Conference on World Evangelization. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, 176-7.

² Harvey Cox, Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century. London: Cassell, 1996: 71.

³ Faupel, 213-222.

⁴ Gary B McGee, 'Pentecostals and their Various Strategies for Global Mission: A Historical Assessment', M.W. Dempster, B.D. Klaus & D. Petersen (eds.), Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991, 208.

creative, particularly in the realm of cultural and religious ethics. These reflections are based on reports and letters to the West written by early Pentecostal missionaries, and in particular by missionaries of the Pentecostal Missionary Union (PMU), an interdenominational organisation founded in 1909 by former China Inland Mission worker Cecil Polhill and Anglican Charismatic vicar Alexander Boddy (among others). The PMU is chosen as representative because it was the earliest Pentecostal mission society, and the missionary reports were extensively published in the early English Pentecostal periodicals, especially in Boddy's Confidence and Polhill's Flames of Fire, the PMU mouthpiece. ⁵ The PMU concentrated mainly on the Chinese borders of Tibet in its early years, Polhill's old field, but in 1909, the first PMU missionaries, Kathleen Miller and Lucy James, left for India. Miller and James were followed by four others a year later going to China, one of whom, John Beruldsen, spent 35 years in North China. The PMU was a small organisation: by 1916 they reported a total of 26 missionaries, of which seventeen were in China, six in India, two in Japan and only one in Africa. Nine years later, just before their takeover by the British Assemblies of God, there were 27 missionaries, of which eighteen were in China (all in Yunnan), six in the Congo, and three in Brazil. 9 There was a high fall-out of missionaries; many died on the field from diseases, but others disappear from the pages of the newsletters without explanation.

The first missionaries that went out from Azusa Street were self-supporting (although mostly with irregular and meagre finances), and a remarkable number were women. Some of the first North American missionaries set sail for China and India, arriving in China as early as August 1907, and African American missionaries went to Liberia in the same year. North American missionaries arrived in South Africa in 1908 and established the Apostolic Faith Mission, working with both Afrikaner and indigenous African workers. Others left for the Bahamas in 1910 and for British East Africa in 1911. The exploits of these and many other Western missionaries were certainly impressive. We can only greatly admire their sacrificial

⁵ I am indebted to the Donald Gee Research Centre, Mattersey, England, and its director David Gerard for access to the Pentecostal periodicals of the period 1908-25.

⁶ Confidence 2:1 (January 1909) 13-5.

⁷ L. Grant McClung, Jr. 'Explosion, Motivation, and Consolidation: The Historical Anatomy of a Missionary Movement', L. Grant McClung, Jr. (ed), Azusa Street and Beyond: Pentecostal missions and Church Growth in the Twentieth Century. South Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1986, 17.

⁸ Confidence 9:1 (January 1916), 17.

⁹ Confidence 140 (May 1925), 167.

¹⁰ Daniel Bays, 'The Protestant Missionary Establishment and the Pentecostal Movement', E.L. Blumhofer, R.P. Spittler & G.A. Wacker (eds.), *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism*. Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999, 52-3.

¹¹ Allan Anderson, Bazalwane: African Pentecostals in South Africa, Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1992, 21.

efforts and in most cases, their selfless dedication, as many even laid down their lives through the ravages of tropical disease. They were often very successful in adapting to extremely difficult circumstances; and many showed a servant heart and genuinely loved the people they worked with. They achieved much against what sometimes seemed overwhelming odds. But there were certain ethical issues raised by their frantic and enthusiastic activities. For these and many other Pentecostal missionaries, 'mission' was understood as 'foreign mission' (mostly cross-cultural, from 'white' to 'other' peoples), and these missionaries were mostly untrained and inexperienced. Their only qualification was the baptism in the Spirit and a divine call, their motivation was to evangelise the world before the imminent coming of Christ, and so evangelism was more important than education or 'civilization'. ¹²

Pentecostals probably did not exhibit the same enslavement to rationalistic theological correctness and cerebral Christianity that plagued many of their contemporary Protestant missionaries. They were not as thoroughly immersed in western theology and ideology as their counterparts. The PMU provided rudimentary training for missionary candidates, but stated that their qualifications had simply to be 'a fair knowledge of every Book in the Bible, and an accurate knowledge of the Doctrines of Salvation and Sanctification', to which was added that candidates 'must be from those who have received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost themselves'. There was no shortage of applications, and entrance requirements subsequently became more difficult, including a required two-year training period. ¹³ In less than a year PMU chairman Cecil Polhill referred to problems his organization had with new missionaries. He said that 'some training was an absolute necessity' as 'previous experience' had shown 'the mistake and undesirability of immature workers, however zealous and spiritual, going forth to a heathen land.'14 We can only speculate at the mistakes early Pentecostal missionaries must have made. Reports filtering back to the West to garnish newsletters and motivate financial support would be full of optimistic and triumphal accounts of how many souls were converted, healed and Spirit baptized, seldom mentioning any difficulties encountered or the inevitable cultural blunders made.15

Pentecostal Missionaries and 'Pagan' Cultures

¹² Walter J. Hollenweger, 'The Black Roots of Pentecostalism', Allan Anderson & Walter J Hollenweger (eds), *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, 34.

¹³ Confidence, 2:6 (June 1909), 129.

¹⁴ Cecil Polhill, Confidence, 2:11 (November 1909), 253.

¹⁵ Allan Anderson, 'Signs and Blunders: Pentecostal Mission Issues at "Home and Abroad" in the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Asian Mission* 2:2, 2000 (193-210)

The first difficulty to be noted was that these early missionaries were ill prepared for the rigours of intercultural and inter-religious communication. Everything happened at great speed, for the early missionaries believed that these were the last days before the imminent return of Christ, and there was no time for proper preparation through such things as language learning and cultural and religious studies. Pentecostal workers from the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant world usually saw their mission in terms of from a civilized, Christian 'home' to a Satanic and pagan 'foreign land', where sometimes their own personal difficulties, prejudices (and possible failures) in adapting to a radically different culture, living conditions and religion were projected in their newsletters home. In 1911, one British missionary in India expressed this fear as she wrote home from western China to *Confidence*:

Please pray for us and the people here, who are living and dying in Satan's kingdom. His reign here is no uncertain one, but a terrible, fearful, crushing rule, driving the people to wickedness and sin such as is not dreamt of in England. It is a force which can be felt everywhere, an awful living presence.¹⁶

They went out, like many other Christian missionaries before them, with a fundamental conviction that the North Atlantic was a 'Christian' realm, that they were sent as 'light' to 'darkness' and that the ancient cultures and religions of the nations to which they were sent were 'heathen', 'pagan' and 'demonic', to be 'conquered' for Christ.¹⁷ Western culture was 'Christian' culture and all other cultures were dark problems to be solved by the light of the gospel, replacing the old 'paganism' with the new 'Christianity'.¹⁸ Missionaries went out from the PMU Missionary Training Homes with the conviction that their 'future labours' would be among 'the poor heathen in darkness'.¹⁹ Religious intolerance and bigoted ignorance were common features of some of these reports, illustrated by a lament from a British PMU missionary in India in 1914, Grace Elkington:

Oh, what a dark, sad land this seems to be, and the longer one lives in it, the more one feels the darkness all around. ... "What has Hinduism contributed to Christianity?" was the subject under discussion [by other missionaries] one evening. ... it was a pity to see young missionaries occupying their time and thoughts with such things, instead of studying and pondering over the Word of God... Why, the best thing any Hindu can do is to die to all his Hinduism and all its distinct lines of thought, and to be baptised into Jesus Christ.²⁰

¹⁶ Constance Skarratt, PMU, India, Confidence 4:9 (September 1911), 214.

¹⁷ A. Kok, Flames of Fire 35, February 1916, 4.

¹⁸ Wilbert R. Shenk, 'Recasting Theology of Mission: Impulses from the Non-Western World', International Bulletin of Missionary Research 25:3 (July 2001), 100.

¹⁹ Jessie Biggs, SS Fushimi Maru, Flames of Fire 49 (May 1917), 40.

²⁰ Grace Elkington, Partabgarth, Confidence 7:12 (December 1914), 238.

Almost four years later, Elkington wrote of Hindu temples as 'the works of the devil', and that 'Ram' (perhaps she meant Rama) was 'a favourite god of the Hindus', and 'supposed to be an incarnation of the second person of the Hindu Trinity'. Another missionary discussed Hinduism, quoting Paul: 'they sacrifice to devils, and not to God' and said that 'The Devil' was 'at the bottom of all their worship'. At a missionary convention in London in 1924, Walter Clifford, on furlough from India, described Hinduism as 'a religion of fear, not a religion of love' and that many of the Indian holy men were 'demon possessed', because 'you can see the devil shining out of their eyes. They have given themselves over to him'. In north-west India, A.L. Slocum complained about the opposition of Muslims, using pejorative terms: 'Satan seems so entrenched in these Mussulmans that my efforts seem only a drop in the bucket'. Young PMU worker Frank Trevitt (who died in China in 1916) sent back this report from 'dark China', obviously identifying a treasured Chinese national symbol with the devil:

This is heathendom truly, without light or love, not even as much as a dumb beast would have. Well, we have seen much of this spirit, which truly is the 'Dragon's' spirit, which is as you know, China's ensign... Oh, how one's heart longs and sighs for the coming of Christ's glorious Ensign, to be placed where the Dragon holds such sway.²⁵

Later on, Trevitt referred to Tibetan Lama priests as Satan's 'wicked messengers', and that 'Satan through them hates Christ in us'. ²⁶ John Beruldsen reported on a visit to a Mongolian 'Lama Temple' in Beijing and describes a priest worshipping 'a large idol from 90 to 100 English feet high'. He comments, 'One could almost smell and feel the atmosphere of hell in these places. Poor benighted people! The power of God could save them from it all, if only they knew it. ²⁷ Fanny Jenner, observing religious rituals in Yunnan, China wrote, 'the heathen spent one whole day in worshipping the graves of relatives—burning incense and weeping and wailing. Oh the mockery of it all. How Satan blinds their minds! ²⁸ Elizabeth Biggs reports from Likiang on a visit to a Tibetan Buddhist lamasery that 'the seat of Satan might be a good name for such a place', because 'the demonic power was keenly felt, and the wicked faces of

²¹ Grace Elkington, India, Confidence 11:3 (July-September 1918), 57.

²² 1 Corinthians 10:20; H. Boyce, Confidence 10:1 (January-February 1917), 11.

²³ Redemption Tidings 1:2 (October 1924),17.

²⁴ The Pentecostal Witness 1 (July 1924), 4.

²⁵ Frank Trevitt, Confidence 4:8 (August 1911), 191.

²⁶ Frank Trevitt, Confidence 5:9 (May 1912), 215; 5:12 (December 1912), 286.

²⁷ John C. Beruldsen, North China, Confidence 6:4 (April 1913), 84.

²⁸ Fanny Jenner, Yunnanfu, Confidence 8:6 (June 1915), 118.

these lamas haunted us for many days after'. ²⁹ Miss Agar tells of the 'tortures of the Buddhist Purgatory' and how she was 'anew impressed with the strong resemblance between Roman Catholicism and Buddhism'. ³⁰

In Africa, the situation was even worse. British Pentecostal missionary Norman Burley gives graphic illustrations of his confrontations with 'the powers of darkness'. He wrote in 1921 of his encounter with 'three of Swaziland's greatest witch doctors, dressed in the most fearsome costume (?) of their devilish trade'. He describes them 'chanting a weird lewd song' and that 'a word from Heaven's Court assailed and broke down the arrayed power and splendour (?) of Satan's assembly' so that they 'had to disband'. 31 Later, he describes a 'large heathen Kraal' with a family gathering for a traditional ritual killing, where 'all are called by the father to lay their hands on the sacrifice, while he calls upon Satan and his demons to behold their devotion, begging that sickness be kept from the Kraal.³² In vet another report, he describes 'all their demon and ancestral worship paraphernalia', which include a big drum, a 'demon designed and a demon-looking headgear', spears and axes, 'several bundles of "muti" (charm medicines), dishes on which food was wont to be offered to demons and to Satan himself', baskets and clothes that were used 'at no other time and for no other purpose than in such devil worship, and by no other than a fully initiated medium'. 33 The fact that so many inaccurate, confrontational and tendentious comments were published in leading British Pentecostal periodicals not only displays the ignorance and prejudices of these missionaries, but also is in itself a reflection of the prevailing cultural and religious ethos of early Pentecostals. This is a far cry from the strategy of Paul, who used existing religious concepts to proclaim his message and was even commended for not blaspheming the goddess Artemis.³⁴

Early Pentecostal missionaries were mostly paternalistic, often creating dependency, and sometimes were overtly racist.³⁵ The attitudes of some of them left much to be desired, to put it mildly. In one shocking report, Fred Johnstone, a missionary writing to *Confidence* from the Congo in 1915 speaks of the 'practically nude natives' who were 'very raw and superstitious'. The missionaries had carriers, who not only bore their heavy luggage for many

²⁹ Elizabeth M. Biggs, Likiang, Flames of Fire 48 (April 1917), 29.

³⁰ Miss Agar, Confidence 8: 6 (June 1915), 119.

³¹ Pastor Burley, Mbunzini, Swaziland, *Things New and Old* 1:4 (October 1921), 32 (question marks in original).

³² Norman Burley, Komatipoort, Things New and Old 2:3 (August 1922), 11.

³³ Norman Burley, Things New and Old 2:5 (December 1922), 7.

³⁴ Acts 19:37.

³⁵ McGee, 'Pentecostals and their Various Strategies', 211.

days on end, but also piggybacked the missionaries across streams and swamps. Some of the carriers became drunk and violent, and the missionaries' solution was to give them 'a thrashing with a stick', after which there was 'perfect peace'. Arriving at their destination, Johnstone reports, 'The natives came to meet their new "mukelenge" (or white chief) for fully a mile from the mission station.'³⁶ Two months later, *Confidence* published another report from Johnstone from 'the wilds of darkest Africa', where he describes the Lulua as a 'very raw, superstitious, and indolent race' who were 'gradually becoming a little more accustomed to the white man and his ways and, praise God, His message of love'.³⁷ But fortunately, this missionary was still on a learning curve. Two years later, as he left his mission for furlough in England he wrote: 'It was very hard to say good-bye to the dear natives whom I had learned to love so much, especially the young teachers in training...'

Racism was frequently in missionary reports. The conference address published in *Confidence* in 1915 by a missionary from Africa, Miss Doeking, 'Leopard's Spots or God's masterpiece, which?', referred to African people as follows:

The savage is God's opportunity, the masterpiece of our common creator, who delights in tackling impossibilities... unless the superior races are ready to humble themselves, we may yet witness such an awakening of the despised races as will put to shame the pride of their superiors.³⁹

The so-called 'superior races' of Europe were at that very time engaged in such a horrible and dehumanising war that the rest of the world could be forgiven for wondering who were actually the 'savages'. The incriminations went on. In South Africa, the Apostolic Faith Mission had by 1917 separated the 'white' churches from the others, and declared, 'we do not teach or encourage social equality between Whites and Natives'. An English worker in India described her visit to a 'low caste village' with a 'little organ' singing hymns, and commented, 'They are so dull and ignorant and have to be taught like children in the K.G. classes', but added patronizingly, 'They followed intelligently, as was shown by their remarks'. Her

³⁶ F. Johnstone, Kalamba Mukenya, Kasai, Confidence 8:5 (May 1915), 98-9.

³⁷ F. Johnstone, Kalamba Mukenya, Kasai, Confidence 8:7 (July 1915), 139.

³⁸ F. Johnstone, Djoka Punda, 'Flames of Fire 53, (September 1917), 72.

³⁹ A.E. Doeking, Confidence 8:8 (August 1915), 154.

⁴⁰ Allan Anderson, Zion and Pentecost: The Spirituality and Experience of Pentecostal and Zionist/ Apostolic Churches in South Africa. Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2000, 86.

⁴¹ Grace Elkington, Flames of Fire 27 (May 1915), 3.

companion missionary obviously felt the same way, speaking of 'these village women of India', and 'how dull they are, and how slow to grasp anything new'. 42

The missionaries in China had better relationships with the people and were generally not as disparaging in their comments. Whether this was because of the influence and experience of Cecil Polhill or the fact that China, unlike India and Africa, was never colonised, is an interesting question. Nevertheless, by 1916 the missionaries were leaving the organising of a Christmas conference in Likiang to the Chinese, with whom they shared meetings, meals and accommodation; and the missionaries declared that they were 'indeed a happy family'. However, these reports continued to carry innuendos, as a few sentences further, the same report quipped, 'The Chinese are not renowned for their truthfulness!' A particularly interesting account of missionary identification was provided for his home church in 1923 by Alfred Lewer, who donned Lisu garb and ate as a Lisu in the presence of the Chinese Official at New Year festivities. Lewer had obviously made cultural decisions, forbidding the wearing of pigtails for Christians, and saying 'we have taught our Christians that they must not bow down to anyone'—a contravention of Chinese custom, especially for the Lisu, a subjugated people. His comments mix insight with innuendo:

From a Chinese point of view it was awful for me, a foreigner, to eat with slaves, but through the grace of God we are all of one family, Hallelujah!... One has to think Yellow out here, and I assure you it is a queer way of thinking at times.... The above incident is one of the greatest victories we could have had.... Do not think it meant any sacrifice to me, it was all enjoyment. Yet I do think love changes things, for a lover will do anything for the one he loves, and I believe we need a real love for our work at home and abroad.⁴⁴

The Missionary Purpose of Tongues

Another cultural insensitivity emanating from the early Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit baptism resulted in a failure to engage in serious language study. Charles Parham, William Seymour and many of the first Pentecostals believed that through Spirit baptism, actual foreign languages had been given them to preach the gospel throughout the world. As Gary McGee has recently shown, this was a widespread belief among 'radical evangelicals' at the end of the 19th

⁴² B. Jones, Flames of Fire 33 (November-December 1915), 9.

⁴³ Confidence 10:2, March-April 1917, 15-17.

⁴⁴ Alfred G. Lewer, Things New and Old 3:2 (June 1923), 9; Redemption Tidings 1:3 (December 1924), 14.

Century. ⁴⁵ By 1906, the year of the Azusa Street revival, Pentecostals almost universally believed that when they spoke in tongues, they had spoken in known languages (*xenolalia*) by which they would preach the gospel to the ends of the earth in the last days. There would be no time for the indeterminable delays of language learning. Early Pentecostal publications were filled with these missionary expectations, and the gift of tongues was often referred to as the 'gift of languages'. In the first issue of Azusa Street's *The Apostolic Faith* (September 1906), the expectations of early North American Pentecostals were clear:

The gift of languages is given with the commission, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.' The Lord has given languages to the unlearned Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, German, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Zulu and languages of Africa, Hindu [sic] and Bengali and dialects of India, Chippewa and other languages of the Indians, Esquimaux, the deaf mute language and, in fact the Holy Ghost speaks all the languages of the world through His children.⁴⁶

In the earliest issues of *The Apostolic Faith*, such accounts abound on every page. The first issue also reported that when Alfred and Lilian Garr received the Spirit, the first white pastors to do so at Azusa Street, they had 'received the gift of tongues, especially the language of India and dialects', they had both been able to speak in Bengali, and Lilian Garr had even spoken Tibetan and Chinese. ⁴⁷ They were among the earliest Pentecostal 'missionaries'. The Spirit had apparently not revealed at the time that there were well over a thousand Indian languages, but the undaunted missionaries went off to Calcutta in 1907 fully expecting to speak Bengali on their arrival. Although disillusioned about their language abilities once they got there, they persevered and were invited to conduct services in a Baptist church where a Pentecostal revival began. Unlike many others who returned home disheartened, the Garrs stayed for some time and later went to Hong Kong to study Chinese. ⁴⁸

One wonders how the identification of these 'languages' was arrived at. Perhaps it was the sound that gave the particular clue. The 'ends of the earth' to which God's people were to be witnesses surely meant China to North Americans and Europeans, and an analysis might reveal that Chinese was the most frequent language 'spoken' in these reports. But a closing paragraph in *Apostolic Faith*, quoting from *Banner of Truth* suggests that behind these evaluations was a blatant paternalism, ethnocentrism and racism:

⁴⁵ Gary B. McGee, 'Shortcut to Language Preparation? Radical Evangelicals, Missions, and the Gift of Tongues', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25:3 (July 2001), 118-125.

⁴⁶ Apostolic Faith 1, Los Angeles (September 1906), 1.

⁴⁷ Apostolic Faith 1, 4; 2 (October 1906), 2.

⁴⁸ G.B. McGee, 'Garr, Alfred Goodrich, Sr.', Burgess, McGee & Alexander, 328.

There are 50,000 languages in the world. Some of them sound like jabber. The Eskimo [sic] can hardly be distinguished from a dog bark. The Lord lets smart people talk in these jabber-like languages. Then He has some child talk in the most beautiful Latin or Greek, just to confound professors and learned people.⁴⁹

Reports of xenolalia continue well into the twenties, and this phenomenon was always regarded as the ultimate 'tongues'. A missionary in China writes of a Bible woman who could not speak a tribal language but was understood in that language as she preached in Chinese.⁵⁰ William Burton writes of Luba people in the Congo on whom 'the Spirit fell' resulting in them praising God 'in beautiful English'. 51 A Catholic priest in India is reported as having heard someone's tongues as 'perfect Syriac'. 52 But despite these sporadic and isolated instances, the 'languages' turned out for the most part to be unknown tongues. Reports from the field abound with hints of the frustrations these missionaries felt because they could not communicate in the languages of the people to whom they were so sure God had sent them. There are no accounts of what happened when they spoke in tongues to their bemused or astonished listeners. Some missionaries turned their frustrations against the very languages they were trying to learn. After berating the Catholic opposition to the Pentecostal mission in the Congo ('we are praying God for victory against this erroneous doctrine of the Devil'), Fred Johnstone said that it was 'so difficult to express deep spiritual things in this language, as it is so very poor'. 53 Many Pentecostal missionaries subsequently resorted to spending time with other missionaries and bringing them to Spirit baptism.⁵⁴

There was clearly a fundamental adjustment going on, and some missionaries were quite clear on their opinion of *xenolalia*. By 1912, Dutch Pentecostal missionary Arie Kok could write from Shantung province in China:

So-called Pentecostal people begin to declare that they <u>alone</u> have the Holy Spirit, and that all those who do not belong to them have Him *not*... Then they reject study of the language as being human, and are spending years in the field without result. They are speaking and shouting in

⁵⁰ Ada Buckwalter, Yunnan, Confidence 130 (July-September 1922), 47.

⁴⁹ Apostolic Faith 7, 4.

⁵¹ William F.P. Burton, Things New and Old 2:6 (February 1923), 12.

⁵² Spencer May, Tranancore State, S. India, Redemption Tidings 2:1 (January 1926), 6.

 $^{^{\}rm 53}$ F. Johnstone, Kalamba Mukenya, Kasai, Flames of Fire 32 (October 1915), 8.

⁵⁴ Bays, 'Protestant Missionary Establishment', 61. The Garrs wrote: 'Reaching the missionaries is laying the axe at the root of the tree, for they know all the customs of India and also the languages. The only way the nations can be reached is by getting the missionaries baptized with the Holy Ghost.' *Apostolic Faith* 9 (June-September 1907), 1.

Tongues until after midnight, and disturb the night rest of others, and, being told so, they answer that they have to obey the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵

Missionaries like Kok, however, turned this seeming setback to their advantage as they began to rely more on indigenous helpers for the progress of the work. He later writes as follows:

One can imagine the difficulty which confronts the missionary in the language problem.... I feel that if the natives themselves do not carry the good news to their own people, the task will be impossible for us foreigners... The Lord is teaching us more and more that the natives are the best evangelists to their own people. So we are praying and believing for a band of native witnesses, filled with the love and the Spirit of God, who are to carry the glad tidings to their own villages. ⁵⁶

Another missionary reflected, 'One realises that there is not only language difficulties to be got over, but the study of the ways and thoughts of the people have also to be mastered in order to become really useful to them and to the Lord.'⁵⁷ The inability to speak the languages and understand the culture was bearing lasting fruit after all. The missionaries were turning their attention to learning to be more sensitive to the cultures and languages of the people, and the churches were quickly turning indigenous. The missionaries may not have foreseen or planned this result, but it was one that was to be of vital importance for the future. Missions like the Congo Evangelistic Mission rejected the use of interpreters and thus forced their workers to learn languages, for as James Salter rightly observed, 'To learn the language is the way to the hearts of the people'. But Burton's policy was clearly stated in 1925: 'The great needs are Spirit-filled native evangelists, and a few white workers to superintend and help them'. Forty-five years after Burton had begun this mission in 1915, it was still directed by an all white Field Executive Council and had sixty-five missionaries working in fourteen mission compounds. 60

It seems that not all Pentecostal missionaries were convinced of the virtues of an indigenous church. Cecil Polhill had encouraged his PMU workers in this direction, and a woman in India replied that 'for India at least, it is quite a new thought that the churches

⁵⁵ A. Kok, Shantung Prov., China, Confidence 5:4 (April 1912), 92 (underlining in original).

⁵⁶ A. & E. Kok, Likiang-fu, Confidence 6:10 (October 1913), 206-7.

⁵⁷ H. Boyce, Confidence 10:1 (January-February 1917), 11.

⁵⁸ James Salter, Address, Derby Hall, London, Things New and Old 3:3 (August 1923), 1.

⁵⁹ W.F.P. Burton, Redemption Tidings 1:4 (January 1925), 12.

⁶⁰ Two missionaries were killed in the Congolese war, and Burton and his missionaries were evacuated in 1960. The result of this seeming setback was that ten years later the churches left behind had more than doubled in number. Harold Womersley 1973, Wm. F.P. Burton: Congo Pioneer. Eastbourne: Victory Press, 77, 113.

should be in the hands of Indian Pastors and Elders', and added wistfully, 'but I am sure it is the *Lord's* plan'. ⁶¹ Polhill wrote a significant article in *Flames of Fire* in May 1917. With astonishing insight for this period, nurtured by his many years of association with the China Inland Mission, he asserted:

Is not that day far nearer in not a few of our fields of work in Asia and Africa than we as yet commonly recognize? The Christians are reckoned by their thousands and tens of thousands. In nature and temperament they are far better qualified than we to present the message to their fellow countrymen. Intellectually they are often fully our equals. Spiritually the power that works in us is also the power that works in them....These are things of high mission policy. Meanwhile the biggest service that the individual missionary can offer will over and over again be known and trusted as a true friend, quietly to live down antipathy and suspicion where it exists, watchfully and generously to seek for opportunities of surrendering to the native brother or sister a task which the foreigner could more easily fulfil himself.⁶²

There are signs that PMU missionaries took his advice seriously. Indigenous leadership was to become one of the strongest features of Pentecostalism throughout the world, and not only in the PMU. Burton's Congo Evangelistic Mission placed a high priority on the training of 'native evangelists' from the start. 63 Clearly, the failure of the belief in the 'languages of the nations' given at Spirit baptism did not mean that all was lost. Frank Macchia points out:

Though the mistaken notion of tongues as divinely given human languages as an evangelistic tool was abandoned, the vision of dynamic empowerment for the global witness of the people of God... remains fundamental to a Pentecostal understanding of tongues.⁶⁴

It was for this reason that the Pentecostal mission activity continued at full strength. Alexander Boddy penned the prevalent optimism of Pentecostal leaders when he described the 'Hall-Marks' of Pentecostal baptism in August 1909. The fifth 'Hall-Mark' was what he called the 'Missionary Test':

In spite of what seemed to be a disappointment when they found they could not preach in the language of the people, and in spite of mistakes made chiefly through their zeal, God has blessed, and now more than ever the Pentecostal Movement is truly a Missionary Movement. With more training now an increasing band of missionaries is in the field or going out... to

⁶¹ Minnie A. Thomas, Arungabad District, India, Flames of Fire 48, April 1917, 31.

⁶² Cecil Polhill, Flames of Fire 49 (May 1917), 38.

⁶³ e.g. James Salter, Things New and Old 1:6 (January 1922), 45; 2:4 (October 1922), 7.

⁶⁴ Macchia, Frank D. 'The Struggle for Global Witness: Shifting Paradigms in Pentecostal Theology', M.W. Dempster, B.D. Klaus & D. Petersen (eds.), The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion made to Travel. Oxford: Regnum, 1999 (8-29), 17; see also McGee, 'Shortcut', 122.

preach Christ and Him crucified to the heathen people, often in very hard places, amidst terrible difficulties.⁶⁵

However, although discarding the belief in *xenolalia*, Pentecostal missionaries from the West in later years continued to promote the dominance of European languages (especially English), and few took the trouble to learn to communicate in the languages of the heart, the mother tongues, preferring to use indigenous interpreters. This was a major disadvantage, for although it facilitated the expansion of indigenous churches over which the missionaries had little effective control, it created a barrier to effective communication and may have amounted to a failure in love.

Historical Imperialism

One of the greatest disservices done to the worldwide Pentecostal movement is to assume that this was a 'made in the USA' product. This is reflected in the debate about Pentecostal origins. Hollenweger and others correctly point to the significance of the Azusa Street revival as a centre of African American (and oral) Pentecostalism that profoundly affected its very nature. But when Los Angeles is assumed to be the 'Jerusalem' from which the 'full gospel' reaches out to the nations of earth, the truth is distorted and smacks of cultural imperialism. 66 There were in fact many 'Jerusalems': Pyongyang, Beijing, Poona, Wakkerstroom, Lagos, Valparaiso, Belem, Oslo and Sunderland, among other centres. As Everett Wilson has observed, Pentecostalism has had many beginnings, and there are many 'Pentecostalisms'. 67 Azusa Street was certainly significant in reminding North American Pentecostals of their non-racial and ecumenical origins and ethos. A choice between Parham and Seymour is an important theological decision to make in defining the essence of Pentecostalism. The Azusa Street revival has given inspiration to many like Black South African Pentecostals, for many decades denied basic human dignities by their white counterparts in the same Pentecostal denominations, some founded by Azusa Street missionaries.68

⁶⁵ A.A. Boddy. Confidence, 2:8 (August 1909), 181.

⁶⁶ This theme is repeated in a footnote to a recent article by L. Grant McClung, Jr. 1999, ''Try to Get People Saved': Revisiting the Paradigm of an Urgent Pentecostal Missiology', Dempster, Klaus & Petersen, Globalization of Pentecostalism, 49, n11.

⁶⁷ Everett A Wilson, 'They Crossed the Red Sea, Didn't They? Critical History and Pentecostal Beginnings', Dempster, Klaus & Petersen, Globalization of Pentecostalism, 107.

⁶⁸ Allan Anderson, 'Dangerous Memories for South African Pentecostals', Allan Anderson & Walter J. Hollenweger (eds.), *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, 105; Anderson, Bazalwane, 23; Anderson, Zion and Pentecost, 58, 85. Emissaries from Azusa Street and Zion City, Tom Hezmalhalch and

But there were places in the world where Pentecostal revival broke out quite independently of the Azusa Street revival and in some cases even predated it. The 'Korean Pentecost' began among missionaries in Pyongyang in 1903. This revival seemed to have been unaffected by the 19th Century 'Evangelical awakenings'; it predated the 1904 Welsh Revival, and it quickly took on an indigenous character of its own. The Korean revival affected other revivals like the Manchurian Revival of 1908,⁶⁹ and irrevocably changed the face of East Asian Christianity. In this context, it is important to note which movement preceded which. Korean Pentecostals are unanimous in acknowledging the contribution of the earlier revival to their own movement. The revival greatly influenced the present dominance of the Charismatic movement in the Presbyterian and Methodist churches there, many of whose characteristic practices have been absorbed by the 'classical' Pentecostal churches (like Yonggi Cho's Yoido Full Gospel Church) that came much later. Furthermore, in spite of North American missionary participation, early Korean revival leaders in the Presbyterian and Methodist churches were much more 'Pentecostal' than the missionaries would have wanted them to be.⁷⁰

Daniel Bays has shown that the influence of Pentecostalism in China 'accelerated the development of indigenous churches', particularly because Pentecostals were closer to the 'traditional folk religiosity' with its 'lively sense of the supernatural' than other churches were. Most of the Chinese indigenous churches today are Pentecostal 'in explicit identity or in orientation'. Bays says that Pentecostalism in China, 'especially its egalitarian style and its provision of direct revelation to all', also facilitated the development of churches independent of foreign missions. This was equally true of Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America—something the early Pentecostal missionaries from the West could not have anticipated and perhaps would not have encouraged.

Similarly in India, the 1905-1907 revival at Pandita Ramabai's Mukti Mission in Poona, in which young women baptized by the Spirit had seen visions, fallen into trances and spoken in tongues, was understood by Ramabai herself to be the means by which the Holy Spirit was creating an indigenous form of Indian Christianity. The Apostolic Faith greeted

John G. Lake, who reported back to Seymour, founded the first Pentecostal church in South Africa, the Apostolic Faith Mission, in 1908. Henry M. Turney, who went to South Africa in 1909 and was associated with the formation of the Assemblies of God there, was an Azusa Street product.

⁶⁹ Daniel H. Bays, 'Christian Revival in China, 1900-1937', E.L.Blumhofer & R. Balmer (eds), Modern Christian Revivals. Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993, 163.

⁷⁰ Jae Bum Lee, 'Pentecostal Type Distinctives and Korean Protestant Church Growth', PhD thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1986; Young Hoon Lee, 'The Holy Spirit Movement in Korea: Its Historical and Doctrinal Development', PhD thesis, Temple University, 1996.

⁷¹ Bays, 'Protestant Missionary Establishment', 63.

⁷² Shamsundar M. Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*. Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1979, 216.

news of the Indian revival in its November 1906 issue with 'Hallelujah! God is sending the Pentecost to India. He is no respecter of persons'. There is no mention of missionaries or of Ramabai's mission, but it suggests that there, 'natives... simply taught of God' were responsible for the outpouring of the Spirit, and that the gifts of the Spirit were given to 'simple, unlearned members of the body of Christ'. Pentecostal missionaries worked with the Mukti Mission for many years and Ramabai received support from the fledgling Pentecostal movement in Britain. However, as Satyavrata has pointed out, 'the original Pentecostal outpouring' in India took place much earlier than Mukti, in Tamil Nadu in 1860 under the Tamil evangelist Aroolappen. Although the Mukti revival itself may not have resulted directly in the formation of Pentecostal denominations, it had other far-reaching consequences that penetrated parts of the world untouched by Azusa Street. By 1912, American Pentecostal missionary George Berg exulted about his 'native workers': 'God has given me a noble band of workers in South India, second to none other in any foreign field'.

In 1907, North American revivalist Willis Hoover, Methodist Episcopal minister in Valparaiso, Chile, heard of the revival in Ramabai's orphanage through a pamphlet by his wife's former classmate Minnie Abrams. Later he enquired about the Pentecostal revivals in other places, especially those in Venezuela, Norway and India among his fellow Methodists.⁷⁷ The revival in his church in 1909 resulted in Hoover's expulsion from the Methodist Church in 1910 and the formation of the Methodist Pentecostal Church, to become an indigenous church and the largest non-Catholic denomination in Chile.⁷⁸ Any connection with Azusa Street was incidental and at most indirect. Douglas Petersen has shown that in Central America (the region closest for North American missionaries), strong Pentecostal churches emerged 'with little external assistance or foreign control'.⁷⁹ There were untold thousands of indigenous revivalists all over the world unconnected with North American Pentecostalism. In the Ivory

⁷³ Apostolic Faith 3, 1. Another report on the revival in India is printed in *The Apostolic Faith* the following month: Apostolic Faith 4, 4. A report in *The Apostolic Faith* in September 1907 (10, 4) from Ceylon suggests that the Mukti revival did not experience tongues until December 1906, after receiving reports from Los Angeles, but this appears to be inaccurate.

⁷⁴ Confidence 1:6 (September 1908), 10.

⁷⁵ Ivan M. Satyavrata, 'Contextual Perspectives on Pentecostalism as a Global Culture: A South Asian View', Dempster, Klaus & Petersen, *Globalization of Pentecostalism*, 205.

⁷⁶ Geo. E. Berg, Peradenuja Post, Ceylon, Confidence 6:1 (January 1913), 20.

⁷⁷ Hoover, Willis C. (trans. Mario G. Hoover), History of the Pentecostal Revival in Chile. Santiago, Chile: Imprenta Eben-Ezer, 2000, 9, 164.

Peter Wagner, Look Out! The Pentecostals are Coming. Carol Stream: Creation House, 1973,
 Juan Sepúlveda, 'Indigenous Pentecostalism and the Chilean Experience', Anderson & Hollenweger, 111-2.

⁷⁹ Douglas Petersen, 'The Formation of Popular, National, Autonomous Pentecostal churches in Central America'. *Pneuma* 16:1, 1994, 23.

Coast and the Gold Coast (now Ghana), the Liberian Kru, William Wade Harris spearheaded a revival in 1914 quite distinct from the western Pentecostal movement, but with many Pentecostal phenomena including healing and speaking in tongues, the largest ingathering of Africans to Christianity the continent had ever seen. Chinese evangelists crisscrossed that vast nation with a Pentecostal message similar to but distinct from its western counterpart. Daniel Bays shows how a Chinese preacher, Mok Lai Chi, was responsible for the early spread of Pentecostalism in Hong Kong and started a Pentecostal newspaper in 1908. This was not primarily a movement from the Western world to 'foreign lands', but also, and perhaps more significantly, from 'foreign lands' to 'foreign lands'.

Despite the undeniably courageous work of the early Pentecostal missionaries from the West, the more important contribution of indigenous evangelists and pastors must be properly recognized. A hankering after a 'conquest of the heathen' that has tended to dominate Pentecostal missions from the West creates more problems than it attempts to solve, particularly in those parts of the world where Christianity has been linked with colonial expansionism. Most of Pentecostalism's rapid expansion in the 20th Century was not mainly the result of the labours of missionaries from North America and western Europe to Africa, Asia and Latin America. It was rather the result of the spontaneous indigenization of the Pentecostal message by thousands of preachers who traversed the continents with a new message of the power of the Spirit, healing the sick, and casting out demons.

Cultural Insensitivities

There can be little doubt that many of the secessions that took place early on in western Pentecostal mission efforts in Africa and elsewhere were at least partly the result of cultural and social insensitivities on the part of the missionaries, many of which have been already illustrated. Early Pentecostal missionaries frequently referred in their newsletters to the 'objects' of mission as 'the heathen', 82 and were slow to recognize indigenous leadership. Missionary paternalism, even if it was 'benevolent' paternalism, was widely practised. Polhill in the first issue of *Flames of Fire* referred approvingly to China's planned forced annexation of Tibet, because this would open up access to this country for missionaries. 83 In Africa, in country after country white Pentecostals followed the example of other expatriate missionaries

⁸⁰ Bays, 'Protestant Missionary Establishment', 54.

⁸¹ Satyavrata, 212.

⁸² Letter from 'West Africa', Confidence, 1:2 (May 1908), 19; Kathleen Miller, Orissa, India, Confidence 2:5 (May 1909), 110.

⁸³ Flames of Fire 1 (October 1911), 1.

and kept control of churches and their indigenous founders, and especially of the finances they raised in western Europe and North America. Most wrote home as if they were mainly (if not solely) responsible for the progress of the Pentecostal work there. The truth was often that the churches grew in spite of (and not because of) these missionaries. As Gary McGee has remarked,

Historically, most Pentecostal missionaries paternally guided their converts and mission churches until after World War II (for some to the present). Ironically, in their zeal to encourage converts to seek spiritual gifts... they actually denied them the gifts of administration and leadership. 84

Early in the formation of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, African pastors were given only nominal and local leadership opportunities, the races were almost immediately separated in baptisms and church gatherings, and apartheid had became the accepted practice of the church. Although African pastors and evangelists were largely responsible for the growth of the movement in South Africa, they have been written out of history—with the exception of Nicholas Bhengu, whose enormous contribution to the development of the South African Assemblies of God was impossible to ignore. It cannot be wondered that the schisms that occurred within the Apostolic Faith movement from 1910 onwards resulted in hundreds of other denominations and the creation of the largest church in South Africa today, the Zion Christian Church. ⁸⁵ These African Pentecostal churches, although perhaps not 'classical Pentecostals' in the usual sense of the word, now represent almost half of the African population. ⁸⁶

There are also examples from later Pentecostal mission history. In Africa's most populous nation Nigeria, the Christ Apostolic Church was founded in 1941 by Pentecostal evangelist Joseph Babalola, after British Pentecostal missionaries objected to Africans using the 'water of life' (water that had been prayed for) in healing rituals. African Pentecostal churches in Nigeria today far outnumber those founded by European missionaries. The African leaders in turn found the missionaries' use of quinine to prevent malaria inconsistent with their proclamation of healing. We can only wonder whether water or quinine had the upper hand in the exercise of faith in this instance. It was not a light decision for the missionaries to take, however. The biggest killers of Pentecostal missionaries who preached divine healing were malaria and other tropical diseases. William Burton struggled hard with this issue and finally decided that the facts were against him. He needed to stay alive to do what God had called him

⁸⁴ McGee, 'Pentecostal Missiology', 279.

⁸⁵ Anderson, Zion and Pentecost, 60-70.

⁸⁶ Anderson, Zion and Pentecost, 13, 41.

to do in the Congo and for him, this meant taking quinine. At about the same time in Ghana, British Apostolic missionaries found a large African church wanting to work with them, but the Europeans insisted that they substitute their calabash rattles used in worship (part of a well established African Christian tradition) for tambourines. The Africans apparently thought that the missionaries wanted to deprive them of their power to ward off evil spirits. The same missionaries later fell out with the Africans over the use of quinine. Many of these and similar struggles were evidence of cultural misunderstandings and insensitivity that could have been avoided.

Sometimes Pentecostal missionaries found conditions in the 'field' quite intolerable, including the people they were meeting. A missionary writing from Berbera, Somaliland to his British supporters in 1908, probably expressed the pent-up feelings of many:

The great majority of the people here are Mahommedans [*sic*], and very ignorant and superstitious, and poverty reigns supreme among thousands of them. Lying, stealing, and begging are the principal occupations of the poor class, and they do not think it any disgrace to have it known.⁸⁷

It seems that this particular missionary didn't send any further letters after this picture of hopelessness; perhaps he gave up. Other missionaries were patronizing and impolite. One woman, writing from Mbabane, Swaziland in 1911, spoke of the work among 'the native boys', quickly explaining that 'all [African males] are called "boys"—from infancy to grey hairs'. Another Pentecostal missionary in Johannesburg writes of the 'Holy Spirit coming down on these black boys [mine workers] in such power'. 88 The use of 'boys' to refer to grown African men was a common practice among Pentecostal missionaries. 89

Accommodation was also found to be intolerable, as missionaries sought to recreate the comforts of 'home'. Two British missionary women in India wrote home in 1912 to complain about the fact that no Europeans lived in that district and that 'there are only native mud houses here, and these are most unhealthy for Europeans to live in', although conceding, 'We could perhaps (with God's grace) manage for a *short* time in one'. 90 But not all had this attitude, for twelve years later a Scottish Pentecostal missionary in West Africa, Matthew Sinclair, did 'manage' for much longer to live in a small room of an African house without

⁸⁷ S.S. Slingerland, Berbera, British Somaliland, Confidence 1:3 (June 1908), 23.

⁸⁸ Frances Taylor, Mbabane, Swaziland, Confidence 4:1 (January 1911), 16; Eleazar & Lizzie Ann Jenkins, Johannesburg, Confidence 4:1 (January 1911), 18.

⁸⁹ e.g. A.W. Richardson, Kalembe Lembe, Congo, Confidence 127 (October-December 1921), 61; James Salter, Mwanza, Congo, Things New and Old 3:1 (April 1923), 7.

⁹⁰ Margaret Clark & Constance Skarratt , Savda, E. Khaudesh, India, Flames of Fire 5 (April 1912), 4; Confidence 5:2 (February 1912), 47.

windows and filled with smoke. He was looking forward to getting 'my little mud hut put up before the rainy season comes on'. 91 A PMU missionary in Tibet, Amos Williams, described Tibetan food, of which 'only those who know anything about Tibetan life will fully understand how unpleasant it really is.'92 His partner Frank Trevitt reported that they had 'only wild Tibetans about us continually', 93 and spoke of Tibet as 'this dark, priest-ridden country'. 94 McGee quotes an Assemblies of God missionary in Burkina Faso who said that although the Mossi people were 'mentally inferior to other tribes', they could 'be trained to a very satisfactory degree'. 95 Although not all missionaries could be credited with such obvious racism, up until the last decade of the 20th Century, 'Missionary Field Fellowships' and other closed clubs of expatriate Pentecostal missionaries have so controlled financial resources, buildings and educational institutions that they have estranged themselves from and created untold resentment among the people they are seeking to serve.

The Pentecostal experience of the power of the Spirit should constitute a unifying factor in a deeply divided church and world, the motivation for social and political engagement, and the catalyst for change in the emergence of a new and better world. The divine Paraclete is also a gentle dove who comes alongside to help, and brings peace and sensitivity to those who are filled with the Spirit. Such an infusion of the Spirit has ethical consequences. The coming of the Spirit was also the reason for an unprecedented flexibility on the part of its emissaries to the various cultures into which the Pentecostal message was taken. But the remaining task of the church to be done in the 21st Century must be defined, not by mission strategists and policy makers in the powerful and wealthy nations of the world, but by the people living in the world's most marginalized parts. Only by 'listening to the margins', ⁹⁶ by allowing the hitherto voiceless to speak, and by recognizing the contribution of those unsung Pentecostal labourers of the past who have been overlooked in our histories and hagiographies, will we together come to a honest appraisal of our world's needs and be able to suggest solutions in the power of the Spirit and in the humility of the Cross.

⁹¹ Matthew Sinclair, W. Africa, The Pentecostal Witness 1 (July 1924), 3.

⁹² Amos Williams, Confidence 5:5 (May 1912), 167.

⁹³ Frank Trevitt, Taocheo, Flames of Fire 9 (January 1913), 5.

⁹⁴ Frank Trevitt, Taocheo, Confidence 6:3 (March 1913), 62.

⁹⁵ McGee, 'Pentecostals and their Various Strategies', 211.

⁹⁶ Ronald N. Bueno, 'Listening to the Margins: Re-historicizing Pentecostal Experiences and Identities', Dempster, Klaus & Petersen, *Globalization of Pentecostalism*, 268.